THE ART OF POETRY

If a painter chose to join a human head to the neck of a horse, and to spread feathers of many a hue over limbs picked up now here now there, so that what at the top is a lovely woman ends below in a black and ugly fish, could you, my friends, if favoured with a private view, refrain from laughing? Believe me, dear Pisos, quite like such pictures would be a book, whose idle fancies shall be shaped like a sick man's dreams, so that neither head nor foot can be assigned to a single shape. "Painters and poets," you say, "have always had an equal right in hazarding anything." We know it: this licence we poets claim and in our turn we grant the like; but not so far that savage should mate with tame, or serpents couple with birds, lambs with tigers.

14 Works with noble beginnings and grand promises often have one or two purple patches so stitched on as to glitter far and wide, when Diana's grove and altar, and

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or the river Rhine, or the rainbow is being described.[a] For such things there is a place, but not just now. Perhaps, too, you can draw a cypress. But what of that, if you are paid to paint a sailor swimming from

[a] These examples are doubtless taken from poems current in Horace's day.

ARS POETICA

OR EPISTLE TO THE PISOS

This, the longest of Horace's poems, is found in nearly all MSS. under the title *Ars Poetica*, which is also the name assigned to it by Quintilian and used by the commentator Porphyrio. Yet the composition is a letter rather than a formal treatise, and it is hard to believe that Horace himself is responsible for the conventional title. It has the discursive and occasionally personal tone of an Epistle, whereas it lacks the completeness, precision, and logical order of a well-constructed treatise. It must therefore be judged by the same standards as the other *Epistles* and *Sermones*, and must be regarded as an expression of more or less random reflections, suggested by special circumstances, upon an art which peculiarly concerned one or more of the persons addressed. These are a father and two sons of the Piso family, but nobody knows with certainty what particular Pisos—and there are many on record—they are.

Though the writer touches upon various kinds of poetry, yet as fully one-third of the whole poem is concerned with the drama, it is a plausible inference that one at least of the Pisos — presumably the elder son (l. 366)—was about to write a play, perhaps one with an Homeric background (ll. 128, 129), and

possibly one conforming to the rules of the Greek satyric drama (ll. 220 ff.). Thus the special interests of the Pisos may have determined Horace's choice of topics.

The following is a brief outline of the main subjects handled in the letter :

(*a*) A poem demands unity, to be secured by harmony and proportion, as well as a wise choice of subject and good diction. Metre and style must be appropriate to theme and to character. A good model will always be found in Homer (ll. 1-152).

(*b*) Dramatic poetry calls for special care—as to character drawing, propriety of representation, length of a play, number of actors, use of the chorus and its music, special features for the satyric type, verse-forms, and employment of Greek models (ll. 153-294).

(*c*) A poet's qualifications include common sense, knowledge of character, adherence to high ideals, combination of the *dulce* with the *utile*, intellectual superiority, appreciation of the noble history and lofty mission of poetry, and above all a willingness to listen to and profit by impartial criticism (ll. 295-476).

The following is a more detailed analysis :

In poetry as in painting there must be unity and simplicity (1-23). We poets must guard against extremes, and while avoiding one error must not fall into its opposite (24-31). A good sculptor pays careful attention to details, but at the same time makes sure that his work as a whole is successful (32-37).

A writer should confine himself to subjects within his power. He will then be at no loss for words and will follow a correct order, which will enable him to

say the right thing at the right moment (38-45). As to diction, he must be careful in his choice of language. He can, by means of a skilful combination, give a fresh tone to familiar terms, and he may even coin words in moderation as the old poets used to do. Like all other mortal things, words change and pass out of existence, for they are subject to the caprice of fashion (46-72).

The metres most fitting for the several types of verse were established by the great Greek poets, and we must follow them (73-85). So with the tone and style of the various kinds. In the drama, for example, the tragic and the comic are distinct, though occasionally they will overlap (86-98), for above all things a play must appeal to the feelings of an audience, and the language must be adapted to the characters impersonated. Where there is lack of such agreement, everybody will laugh in scorn (99-118).

Either follow tradition or invent a consistent story. Achilles, Medea, Orestes, and so on must be portrayed as they are known to us in Greek literature, while new characters must be handled with a consistency of their own (119-127). It is hard to deal with general notions, such as anger, greed, and cowardice, so as to individualize them for yourself and you, my friend Piso, are quite right to dramatize some Homeric theme, where the characters introduced have well-known traits, rather than attempt something distinctly original. And yet, even in such public property as the Homeric epics you may win private rights by handling your material in an original fashion. Make a simple beginning, like that of the *Odyssey*, where the sequel becomes clearer and

increases in brilliancy. Homer indulges in no lengthy introduction, but hurries on with his narrative, omits what he cannot adorn, and never loses the thread of his story (128-152).

If you want your play to succeed, you must study the " strange, eventful history " of human life, and note the characteristics of the several ages of man, so that the different periods may not be confused (153-178). Events may be set forth in action or, less preferably, in narrative. The latter method, however, must be used in the case of revolting and incredible incidents (179-188).

A play should be in five acts. The *deus ex machina* should be employed only rarely, and there should never be more than three characters on the stage at one time (189-192). The Chorus should take a real part in the action; it should not sing anything irrelevant, and should promote the cause of morality and religion (193-201). As to the music, the flute was once a simple instrument, which accompanied the chorus, and was not expected to fill large theatres as nowadays. With the growth of wealth and luxury in the state, and the consequent deterioration in the taste and character of the audience, the music became more florid and sensational, the diction more artificial, and the sentiments more obscure and oracular (202-219).

The satyric drama, with its chorus of goat-footed fauns, which was devised for spectators in their lighter moods, naturally assumed a gay and frolicsome tone as compared with the serious tragedy from which it sprang, but this does not warrant a writer in permitting his gods and heroes to use vulgar speech, or on the other hand in allowing them to

indulge in ranting. There should be a happy mean between the language of tragedy and that of comedy. I would aim at a familiar style, so that anyone might think it easy to write in that fashion, but on trying would find out his mistake. The rustic fauns must not talk like city wits, nor yet use such coarse language that they will give offence to the better part of an audience (220-250).

As to metre, the iambic is strictly a rapid measure, so that a senarius is counted as a trimeter. But the older poets admitted the spondee so freely, that it obscured the rhythm and made it heavy. In fact, it is not every critic that can detect unmusical verses, and too much freedom has been allowed our native poets. Shall I presume on this or shall I write with caution? If I follow the latter course, I may avoid criticism, but I shall not win praise. The proper course is to study Greek models night and day. He who is conversant with them will see that our fathers' admiration for the rhythms, as well as the wit, of Plautus, was uncalled for (251-274).

Thespis, we are told, invented Tragedy, and Aeschylus perfected it. Old Attic Comedy, too, won no little renown until its licence had to be checked by law and its chorus was silenced (275-284). Our Roman poets, besides following the Greeks, were bold enough to invent forms of a national drama, and might have rivalled their masters, had they taken more pains. I beg you, my friends, to condemn every poem which has not been subjected to the finishing touch (285-294).

The idea that genius is allied to madness is carried so far that many would-be poets are slovenly in appearance and neglect their health. It is not worth

while to compose poetry at the expense of your wits. so, refraining from writing myself, I will teach the art to others, even as a whetstone can sharpen knives, though it cannot cut (295-308).

The first essential is wisdom. This you can cultivate by study of the philosophers, and when you have first learned from them valuable lessons of life, you should apply yourself to life itself, and then your personages will speak like real living beings. Sometimes striking passages and characters properly portrayed commend a mediocre play better than do verses which lack substance, mere trifles, however melodious (309-322).

The Greeks had genius, eloquence, and ambition ; the Romans are too practical, even in their elementary schooling. How can we expect a people thus trained to develop poets ? Poetry aims at both instruction and pleasure. In your didactic passages, be not long-winded ; in your fiction, avoid extravagance. Combine the *utile* with the *dulce*, for only thus will you produce a book that will sell, and enjoy a wide and lasting fame (323-346).

Absolute perfection, however, is not to be expected, and we must allow for slight defects. When I come across a good line in a poor poem, I am surprised and amused ; I am merely grieved if Homer now and then nods (347-360). The critic must bear in mind that poetry is like painting. In each case the aim in view is to be considered. A miniature should bear close inspection ; a wall-painting is to be seen from a distance. One thing which may be tolerated in other fields, but which in the sphere of poetry, whose aim is to give pleasure, is never allowed, is mediocrity. Like the athlete, therefore, the poet

needs training—a truth overlooked by many. But you are too sensible to make a mistake here. You will write only when Minerva is auspicious, and what you write you will submit to a good critic. Even then you will be in no haste to publish (361-390).

Remember the glorious history of poetry, which—as the stories of Orpheus and Amphion show—has from the very infancy of the race promoted the cause of civilization. Then, from Homer on, it has inspired valour, has taught wisdom, has won the favour of princes, and has afforded relief after toil. Never need you be ashamed of the Muse (391-407).

The question has been asked whether it is natural ability or teaching that makes the poet. Both are necessary. However much people may boast of their gifts, ability without training will accomplish no more in writing than in running a race or in flute-playing (408-418).

It is easy for a rich poet to buy applause. Flatterers are like hired mourners at a funeral, who feel no grief, however much they may weep. So be not deceived, but take a lesson from those kings, who, acting on the adage *in vino veritas*, make men disclose the truth by plying them with wine (419-437).

Quintilius Varus was a frank and sincere critic, and if you would not take his advice he would leave you to your self-conceit. No honest man, for fear of giving offence, will conceal his friend's faults from him, for those faults may lead to serious consequences (438-452).

And think of the danger of a crazy poet roaming at large. First, there is danger for himself, for if, as he goes about with upturned gaze, he fall into a ditch, nobody will pull him out. Indeed, he may

have gone in on purpose, like Empedocles, who, thinking himself divine, once leaped into burning Aetna. And secondly, there is danger for others, for if he is so stark, staring mad as to be ever making verses, he will become a public scourge, and if he catches some poor wretch he will fasten on him like a leech, and make him listen to his recitations until he has bored him to death (453-476)!

The sketch of a crazy poet with which the poem closes corresponds to that of the crazy painter with which it opens. Both painter and poet are used to impress upon readers the lesson that in poetry as in other arts the main principle to be followed is propriety. This idea of literary propriety, which runs through the whole epistle, is illustrated in many ways, and may be said to give the *Ars Poetica* an artistic unity. (So Roy Kenneth Hack, "The Doctrine of Literary Forms" in *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, vol. xxvii., 1916.)

DE ARTE POETICA[1]

Humano capiti[2] cervicem pictor equinam
iungere si velit, et varias inducere plumas
undique collatis membris, ut turpiter atrum
desinat in piscem mulier formosa superne,
spectatum admissi[3] risum teneatis, amici ?
credite, Pisones,[4] isti tabulae fore librum
persimilem, cuius, velut aegri[5] somnia, vanae
fingentur[6] species, ut nec pes nec caput uni
reddatur formae. " pictoribus atque poetis
quidlibet[7] audendi[8] semper fuit acqua potestas."
scimus, et hanc veniam petimusque damusque
vicissim ;
sed non ut placidis coeant immitia, non ut
serpentes avibus geminentur, tigribus agni.
Inceptis gravibus plerumque et magna professis
purpureus, late qui splendeat, unus et alter
adsuitur pannus, cum lucus et ara Dianae
et properantis aquae per amoenos ambitus agros
aut flumen Rhenum aut pluvius[9] describitur arcus.
sed nunc non erat his locus. et fortasse cupressum
scis simulare : quid hoc, si fractis enatat exspes[10]

[1] *For the* Ars Poetica *class I of the* MSS. *includes aBCKM, while class II includes Rφψδλlπ.*
[2] pectori B^1. [3] missi *BC*. [4] pisonis, *II*. [5] aegris a^1BR.
[6] funguntur *B*: fingentur *or* finguntur.
[7] quodlibet *π*. [8] audiendi *B*.
[9] fluvius, *II*. [10] expers, *II*.

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or the river Rhine, or the rainbow is being described.[a] For such things there is a place, but not just now. Perhaps, too, you can draw a cypress. But what of that, if you are paid to paint a sailor swimming from

[a] These examples are doubtless taken from poems current in Horace's day.

navibus, aere dato qui pingitur ? amphora coepit
institui : currente rota cur urceus exit ?
denique sit quod vis,[1] simplex dumtaxat et unum.
Maxima pars vatum, pater et iuvenes patre digni,
decipimur specie recti. brevis esse laboro,
obscurus fio ; sectantem levia[2] nervi
deficiunt animique ; professus grandia turget ;
serpit humi tutus nimium timidusque procellae :
qui variare cupit rem prodigialiter unam,
delphinum silvis appingit, fluctibus aprum.
in vitium ducit culpae fuga, si caret arte.
Aemilium circa ludum faber imus[3] et unguis
exprimet et mollis imitabitur aere capillos,
infelix operis summa, quia ponere totum
nesciet. hunc ego me,[4] si quid componere curem,
non magis esse velim, quam naso vivere pravo,[5]
spectandum nigris oculis nigroque[6] capillo.
Sumite materiam vestris, qui scribitis, aequam
viribus et versate diu, quid ferre recusent,
quid valeant umeri. cui lecta potenter erit res,
nec facundia deseret hunc nec lucidus ordo.
ordinis haec virtus erit et venus, aut[7] ego fallor,
ut[8] iam nunc dicat iam nunc debentia dici,

[1] quidvis *K Bentley.* [2] lenia *Bentley.*
[3] unus δ^1 *Bentley.* [4] egomet $\delta\phi\psi$.
[5] parvo $\delta\lambda\pi$. [6] nigrove *BCK.*
[7] haut *or* haud *BCK, II* (except π). [8] aut, *II.*

[a] One who has been saved from a shipwreck wants to put a picture of the scene as a votive offering in a temple.
[b] So the scholiasts, *imus* being local amd meaning

his wrecked vessel in despair?[a] That was a wine-jar, when the moulding began: why, as the wheel runs round, does it turn out a pitcher? In short, be the work what you will, let it at least be simple and uniform.

[24] Most of us poets, O father and ye sons worthy of the father, deceive ourselves by the semblance of truth. Striving to be brief, I become obscure. Aiming at smoothness, I fail in force and fire. One promising grandeur, is bombastic; another, over-cautious and fearful of the gale, creeps along the ground. The man who tries to vary a single subject in monstrous fashion, is like a painter adding a dolphin to the woods, a boar to the waves. Shunning a fault may lead to error, if there be lack of art.

[32] Near the Aemilian School, at the bottom of the row,[b] there is a craftsman who in bronze will mould nails and imitate waving locks, but is unhappy in the total result, because he cannot represent a whole figure. Now if I wanted to write something, I should no more wish to be like him, than to live with my nose turned askew, though admired for my black eyes and black hair.

[38] Take a subject, ye writers, equal to your strength; and ponder long what your shoulders refuse, and what they are able to bear. Whoever shall choose a theme within his range, neither speech will fail him, nor clearness of order. Of order, this, if I mistake not, will be the excellence and charm that the author of the long-promised poem shall say at the moment what at that moment should be said,

"the last" of a number of shops. Some, however, take it in the sense of "humblest." Bentley's *unus* is to be taken closely with *exprimet*, "mould better than any others."

pleraque differat et praesens in tempus omittat,
hoc amet, hoc spernat[1] promissi carminis auctor.
In verbis etiam tenuis cautusque serendis[2]
dixeris[3] egregie, notum si callida verbum
reddiderit iunctura novum. si forte necesse est
indiciis monstrare recentibus abdita rerum,[4]
fingere cinctutis non exaudita Cethegis
continget, dabiturque licentia sumpta pudenter :
et nova fictaque[5] nuper habebunt verba fidem, si
Graeco fonte cadent[6] parce detorta. quid autem
Caecilio Plautoque dabit Romanus ademptum
Vergilio Varioque[7] ? ego cur, adquirere pauca
si possum, invideor, cum lingua Catonis et Enni
sermonem patrium ditaverit et nova rerum
nomina protulerit ? licuit semperque licebit
signatum praesente nota producere[8] nomen.
ut silvae foliis[9] pronos mutantur in annos,
prima cadunt ; ita verborum vetus interit aetas,
et iuvenum ritu florent modo nata vigentque.
debemur morti nos nostraque : sive receptus
terra Neptunus classes Aquilonibus arcet,
regis opus, sterilisve[10] palus diu aptaque remis

[1] spernet *BC*.
[2] *Bentley transposed ll.* 45 *and* 46, *and has been followed by most editors. The scholiasts, however, had l.* 45 *preceding l.* 46. *Servius, too, though he cites l.* 45 *three times* (*on* Aeneid, iv. 412, 415 ; Georgics, ii. 475) *nowhere applies it to diction.*
[3] dixerit *B*. [4] rerum et, *II*. [5] factaque.
[6] cadant *a*, *Servius on Virg.* Aen. vi. 34.
[7] Varoque $\phi\psi\delta$. [8] procudere *Bentley*.
[9] folia in silvis *Diomedes*. [10] sterilisque, *I* (*except a*).

[a] Bentley's transposition of lines 45 and 46, making *hoc . . . hoc* refer to *verbis*, seems unnecessary. The traditional order is retained by Wickham and Rolfe. Horace deals first with the arrangement of argumentative material,

reserving and omitting much for the present, loving this point and scorning that.[a]

[46] Moreover, with a nice taste and care in weaving words together, you will express yourself most happily, if a skilful setting makes a familiar word new. If haply one must betoken abstruse things by novel terms, you will have a chance to fashion words never heard of by the kilted[b] Cethegi, and licence will be granted, if used with modesty; while words, though new and of recent make, will win acceptance, if they spring from a Greek fount and are drawn therefrom but sparingly.[c] Why indeed shall Romans grant this licence to Caecilius and Plautus, and refuse it to Virgil and Varius? And why should I be grudged the right of adding, if I can, my little fund, when the tongue of Cato and of Ennius has enriched our mother-speech and brought to light new terms for things? It has ever been, and ever will be, permitted to issue words stamped with the mint-mark of the day. As forests change their leaves with each year's decline, and the earliest drop off[d]: so with words, the old race dies, and, like the young of human kind, the new-born bloom and thrive. We are doomed to death—we and all things ours; whether Neptune, welcomed within the land, protects our fleets from northern gales—a truly royal work—or a marsh, long a waste where oars

and in l. 46 passes to diction (*cf.* Fiske, *Lucilius and Horace*, p. 449 and note 50).

[b] The *cinctus* was a loin-cloth worn instead of the *tunica* by the Romans in days of old.

[c] As Wickham has seen, the metaphor is taken from irrigation; "the sluices must be opened sparingly."

[d] In Italian woods, as in Californian, leaves may stay on the trees two or even three years. Only the oldest (*prima*) drop off each autumn.

vicinas urbes alit et grave sentit aratrum,
seu cursum mutavit iniquum frugibus amnis
doctus iter melius : mortalia facta peribunt,
nedum sermonum stet honos et gratia vivax.
multa renascentur quae iam cecidere, cadentque
quae nunc sunt in honore vocabula, si volet usus,
quem penes arbitrium est et ius et norma loquendi.
Res gestae regumque ducumque et tristia bella
quo scribi possent numero, monstravit Homerus.
versibus impariter iunctis querimonia primum,
post etiam inclusa est voti sententia compos ;
quis tamen exiguos elegos emiserit auctor,
grammatici certant et adhuc sub iudice lis est.
Archilochum proprio rabies armavit iambo :
hunc socci cepere pedem grandesque coturni
alternis aptum sermonibus et popularis
vincentem strepitus et natum rebus agendis.
musa dedit fidibus divos puerosque deorum
et pugilem victorem et equum certamine primum
et iuvenum curas et libera vina referre.
descriptas servare vices operumque colores

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[a] Horace finds three illustrations of human achievement in certain engineering works planned by Julius Caesar or Augustus. These were: (1) the building of the Julian Harbour on the Campanian coast, where, under Agrippa, Lakes Avernus and Lucrinus were connected by a deep channel, and the sandy strip between the Lucrine Lake and the sea was pierced so as to admit ships from the Tuscan Sea; *cf.* Virgil, *Georgics*, ii. 161 ff.; (2) the draining of the Pomptine marshes, planned by Julius Caesar and perhaps executed by Augustus; (3) the straightening of the Tiber's course so as to protect Rome from floods.

[b] *Cf. Epistles* ii. 2. 119. [c] The dactylic hexameter.

[d] The elegiac couplet, made up of a hexameter and a pentameter (hence *impariter iunctis*), was commonly used in inscriptions associated with votive offerings and expressed

were plied, feeds neighbouring towns and feels the weight of the plough; or a river has changed the course which brought ruin to corn-fields and has learnt a better path[a]: all mortal things shall perish, much less shall the glory and glamour of speech endure and live. Many terms that have fallen out of use shall be born again, and those shall fall that are now in repute, if Usage so will it, in whose hands lies the judgement, the right and the rule of speech.[b]

73 In what measure the exploits of kings and captains and the sorrows of war may be written, Homer has shown.[c] Verses yoked unequally first embraced lamentation, later also the sentiment of granted prayer[d]: yet who first put forth humble elegiacs, scholars dispute, and the case is still before the court. Rage armed Archilochus with his own *iambus*: this foot comic sock and high buskins alike adopted, as suited to alternate speech, able to drown the clamours of the pit, and by nature fit for action.[e] To the lyre the Muse granted tales of gods and children of gods, of the victor in boxing, of the horse first in the race, of the loves of swains, and of freedom over wine.[f] If I fail to keep and do not understand these well-marked shifts and shades of poetic forms,[g]

in the form of epigrams. The earliest elegiacs, however, were probably laments, such as those written by Archilochus on the loss of friends at sea.

[e] The iambic trimeter was the measure used in dialogue, both in comedies and tragedies. For Archilochus see *Epist.* i. 19. 23 ff.

[f] Greek lyric poetry embraced hymns to the gods and heroes, odes commemorating victories in the games, love poems, and drinking-songs. For Pindaric themes *cf. Odes*, iv. 2. 10-24.

[g] From here on Horace deals especially with dramatic poetry. Tone and style, diction and metre should all accord.

cur ego si nequeo ignoroque poeta salutor ?
cur nescire pudens prave quam discere malo ?
versibus exponi tragicis res comica non volt ;
indignatur item privatis ac prope socco
dignis carminibus narrari cena Thyestae.
singula quaeque locum teneant sortita decentem.[1]
interdum tamen et vocem Comoedia tollit,
iratusque Chremes tumido delitigat ore ;
et tragicus plerumque dolet sermone pedestri
Telephus et Peleus, cum pauper et exsul uterque
proicit ampullas et sesquipedalia verba,
si curat[2] cor spectantis tetigisse querella.
Non satis est pulchra esse poemata ; dulcia sunto
et quocumque volent[3] animum auditoris agunto.
ut ridentibus arrident, ita flentibus adsunt[4]
humani voltus : si vis me flere, dolendum est
primum ipsi tibi : tunc[5] tua me infortunia laedent,
Telephe vel Peleu ; male si mandata loqueris,
aut dormitabo aut ridebo. tristia maestum
voltum verba decent, iratum plena minarum,
ludentem lasciva, severum seria dictu.
format enim Natura prius nos intus ad omnem
fortunarum habitum ; iuvat aut impellit ad iram,
aut ad humum maerore gravi deducit et angit ;
post effert animi motus interprete lingua.
si dicentis erunt fortunis absona dicta,
Romani tollent equites peditesque cachinnum.
intererit multum, divusne[6] loquatur an heros,
maturusne senex an adhuc florente iuventa

[1] decentem *VBK*: decenter *aCM, II.*
[2] curas. [3] volunt, *II.*
[4] adsunt *mss.*: adflent *Bentley.*
[5] tum *BCK.* [6] Davusne *K.*

[a] *Cf. Epist.* i. 3. 14.

why am I hailed as poet? Why through false shame do I prefer to be ignorant rather than to learn? A theme for Comedy refuses to be set forth in verses of Tragedy; likewise the feast of Thyestes scorns to be told in strains of daily life that well nigh befit the comic sock. Let each style keep the becoming place allotted it. Yet at times even Comedy raises her voice, and an angry Chremes storms in swelling tones; so, too, in Tragedy Telephus and Peleus often grieve in the language of prose, when, in poverty and exile, either hero throws aside his bombast [a] and Brobdingnagian [b] words, should he want his lament to touch the spectator's heart.

99 Not enough is it for poems to have beauty: they must have charm, and lead the hearer's soul where they will. As men's faces smile on those who smile, so they respond to those who weep. If you would have me weep, you must first feel grief yourself: then, O Telephus or Peleus, will your misfortunes hurt me: if the words you utter are ill suited, I shall laugh or fall asleep. Sad tones befit the face of sorrow; blustering accents that of anger; jests become the merry, solemn words the grave. For Nature first shapes us within to meet every change of fortune: she brings joy or impels to anger, or bows us to the ground and tortures us under a load of grief; then, with the tongue for interpreter, she proclaims the emotions of the soul. If the speaker's words sound discordant with his fortunes, the Romans, in boxes and pit alike, will raise a loud guffaw. Vast difference will it make, whether a god be speaking or a hero, a ripe old man or one still in

[b] *Sesquipedalia verba*, lit. "words a foot and a half in length."

fervidus, et matrona potens an sedula nutrix,
mercatorne vagus cultorne virentis[1] agelli,
Colchus an Assyrius, Thebis nutritus an Argis.
Aut famam sequere aut sibi convenientia finge.
scriptor honoratum[2] si forte reponis Achillem,
impiger, iracundus, inexorabilis, acer,
iura neget sibi nata, nihil non arroget armis.
sit Medea ferox invictaque, flebilis Ino,
perfidus Ixion, Io vaga, tristis Orestes.
si quid inexpertum scaenae committis et audes
personam formare novam, servetur ad imum,
qualis ab incepto processerit, et sibi constet.
Difficile est proprie communia dicere ; tuque
rectius Iliacum carmen deducis in actus,
quam si proferres ignota indictaque primus.
publica materies privati iuris erit, si
non circa vilem patulumque moraberis orbem,
nec verbo verbum[3] curabis reddere fidus
interpres, nec desilies imitator in artum,
unde pedem proferre pudor vetet aut operis lex.

[1] vigentis *M*, *II*. [2] Homereum *Bentley*.
[3] verbum verbo *C*.

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[a] The Assyrian would be effeminate, as compared with the Colchian, but both would be barbarians. The Theban Creon is a headstrong tyrant, while the Argive Agamemnon shows reserve and dignity.

[b] In the *Iliad* Achilles was first scorned by Agamemnon but in the sequel (Book IX, the embassy) highly honoured. Bentley conjectured that *honoratum* was a corruption of *Homereum*, "the Achilles of Homer," but we are dealing with a not uncommon use of the participle. So Elmore in *C.R.* xxxiii. (1919) p. 102 ; *cf. Sat.* i. 6. 126.

[c] By *publica materies* Horace means Homer and the epic field in general. A poet may make this his own by originality in the handling. Commentators are divided as to whether *communia* (l. 128) is identical with *publica materies*

the flower and fervour of youth, a dame of rank or a bustling nurse, a roaming trader or the tiller of a verdant field, a Colchian or an Assyrian, one bred at Thebes or at Argos.[a]

119 Either follow tradition or invent what is self-consistent. If haply, when you write, you bring back to the stage the honouring of Achilles,[b] let him be impatient, passionate, ruthless, fierce; let him claim that laws are not for him, let him ever make appeal to the sword. Let Medea be fierce and unyielding, Ino tearful, Ixion forsworn, Io a wanderer, Orestes sorrowful. If it is an untried theme you entrust to the stage, and if you boldly fashion a fresh character, have it kept to the end even as it came forth at the first, and have it self-consistent.

128 It is hard to treat in your own way what is common: and you are doing better in spinning into acts a song of Troy than if, for the first time, you were giving the world a theme unknown and unsung. In ground open to all you will win private rights,[c] if you do not linger along the easy and open pathway, if you do not seek to render word for word as a slavish translator, and if in your copying you do not leap into the narrow well, out of which either shame or the laws of your task will keep you from stirring

or not. The language is in the domain of law and as *res communes*, things common to all mankind, as the air and sea, differ from *res publicae*, things which belong to all citizens of a state, as its roads and theatres, so here *communia* covers a larger field than *publica*, and denotes characteristics which are common among mankind. These may be compared to the general truths (τὰ καθόλου) of Aristotle (*Poet.* ix.), as distinguished from particular ones (τὰ καθ' ἕκαστον). In Horace it is obvious that *communia* does not apply to *Iliacum carmen*, which does, however, come under the *publica materies* of the poet.

nec sic incipies ut scriptor cyclicus olim :
" fortunam Priami cantabo et nobile[1] bellum."
quid dignum tanto feret hic promissor hiatu ?
parturient[2] montes, nascetur ridiculus mus.
quanto rectius hic, qui nil molitur inepte :
" dic mihi, Musa, virum, captae post tempora Troiae
qui[3] mores hominum multorum vidit et urbes."
non fumum ex fulgore, sed ex fumo dare lucem
cogitat, ut speciosa dehinc miracula promat,
Antiphaten Scyllamque et cum Cyclope Charybdin.
nec reditum Diomedis ab interitu Meleagri,
nec gemino bellum Troianum orditur ab ovo ;
semper ad eventum festinat et in medias res
non secus ac notas auditorem rapit, et quae
desperat tractata nitescere posse, relinquit,
atque ita mentitur, sic veris falsa remiscet,
primo ne medium, medio ne discrepet imum.
Tu quid ego et populus mecum desideret audi,
si plosoris[4] eges aulaea manentis et usque
sessuri,[5] donec cantor " vos plaudite " dicat,
aetatis cuiusque notandi sunt tibi mores,
mobilibusque[6] decor naturis dandus et annis.
reddere qui voces iam scit puer et pede certo
signat humum, gestit paribus colludere, et iram

[1] cantarat nobile *B*. [2] parturiunt. [3] quis *B*.
[4] plosoris *V*, *I*: plus oris, *II*: plausoris B^2.
[5] sessori *B*. [6] nobilibusque *B*.

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[a] Horace utilizes the fable of the goat that leapt into a well, but has nothing to say about the fox who persuaded him to do so.

[b] The opening of the *Odyssey*.

[c] Meleager was an uncle of Diomede, and therefore of an older generation.

[d] *i.e.* from the birth of Helen.

[e] The *cantor* was probably the young slave who stood

a step.[a] And you are not to begin as the Cyclic poet of old :

> Of Priam's fate and famous war I'll sing.

What will this boaster produce in keeping with such mouthing ? Mountains will labour, to birth will come a laughter-rousing mouse ! How much better he who makes no foolish effort :

> Sing, Muse, for me the man who on Troy's fall
> Saw the wide world, its ways and cities all.[b]

Not smoke after flame does he plan to give, but after smoke the light, that then he may set forth striking and wondrous tales—Antiphates, Scylla, Charybdis, and the Cyclops. Nor does he begin Diomede's return from the death of Meleager,[c] or the war of Troy from the twin eggs.[d] Ever he hastens to the issue, and hurries his hearer into the story's midst, as if already known, and what he fears he cannot make attractive with his touch he abandons ; and so skilfully does he invent, so closely does he blend facts and fiction, that the middle is not discordant with the beginning, nor the end with the middle.

153 Now hear what I, and with me the public, expect. If you want an approving hearer, one who waits for the curtain, and will stay in his seat till the singer[e] cries " Give your applause," you must note the manners of each age, and give a befitting tone to shifting natures and their years. The child, who by now can utter words and set firm step upon the ground, delights to play with his mates, flies

near the flute-player and sang the *cantica* of a play, while the actor gesticulated. All the comedies of Plautus and Terence close with *plaudite* or an equivalent phrase.

colligit ac ponit temere et mutatur in horas.
imberbis[1] iuvenis, tandem custode remoto,
gaudet equis canibusque et aprici gramine Campi,
cereus in vitium flecti, monitoribus asper,
utilium tardus provisor, prodigus aeris,
sublimis cupidusque et amata relinquere pernix.
conversis studiis aetas animusque virilis
quaerit opes et amicitias, inservit honori,
commisisse cavet quod mox mutare[2] laboret.
multa senem circumveniunt incommoda, vel quod
quaerit et inventis miser abstinet ac timet uti,
vel quod res omnis timide gelideque ministrat,
dilator[3] spe longus, iners avidusque futuri,
difficilis, querulus, laudator temporis acti
se puero, castigator censorque minorum.
multa ferunt anni venientes commoda secum,
multa recedentes adimunt. ne forte seniles
mandentur iuveni partes pueroque viriles,
semper in adiunctis aevoque morabimur[4] aptis.[5]
Aut agitur res in scaenis aut acta refertur.
segnius irritant animos demissa per aurem
quam quae sunt oculis subiecta fidelibus et quae
ipse sibi tradit spectator : non tamen intus
digna geri promes in scaenam, multaque tolles

[1] imberbis *aB*: imberbus *VCM*; *cf.* Epist. ii. 1. 85.
[2] mox mutare] permutare, *II.*
[3] delator *B.*
[4] morabitur *B*, *II*, *Vollmer.*
[5] apti *B.*

[a] *i.e.* Campus Martius.

[b] *Spe longus* seems to be a translation of Aristotle's δύσελπις (*Rhet.* ii. 12), hence Bentley conjectured *lentus* for *longus*. It is, however, in view of Horace's *spes longa* (*Odes*, i. 4. 15; i. 11. 6) taken by some as "far-reaching in hope," the hope requiring a long time for fulfilment. Wickham suggests "patient in hope," but the quality is here one of the *incommoda* of age, not one of its blessings. The

into a passion and as lightly puts it aside, and changes every hour. The beardless youth, freed at last from his tutor, finds joy in horses and hounds and the grass of the sunny Campus,[a] soft as wax for moulding to evil, peevish with his counsellors, slow to make needful provision, lavish of money, spirited, of strong desires, but swift to change his fancies. With altered aims, the age and spirit of the man seeks wealth and friends, becomes a slave to ambition, and is fearful of having done what soon it will be eager to change. Many ills encompass an old man, whether because he seeks gain, and then miserably holds aloof from his store and fears to use it, or because, in all that he does, he lacks fire and courage, is dilatory and slow to form hopes,[b] is sluggish and greedy of a longer life, peevish, surly, given to praising the days he spent as a boy, and to reproving and condemning the young. Many blessings do the advancing years bring with them; many, as they retire, they take away. So, lest haply we assign a youth the part of age, or a boy that of manhood, we shall ever linger over traits that are joined and fitted to the age.

179 Either an event is acted on the stage, or the action is narrated. Less vividly is the mind stirred by what finds entrance through the ears than by what is brought before the trusty eyes, and what the spectator can see for himself. Yet you will not bring upon the stage what should be performed behind the scenes, and you will keep much from our

phrase is explanatory of *dilator*, even as *avidus futuri* explains *iners*, for unlike the youth, who is absorbed in the present, the old man fails to act promptly, because his heart is in the future, however brief that is to be.

ex oculis, quae mox narret facundia praesens;
ne pueros coram populo Medea trucidet,
aut humana palam coquat exta nefarius Atreus,
aut in avem Procne vertatur, Cadmus in anguem.
quodcumque ostendis mihi sic, incredulus odi.

Neve minor neu sit quinto productior actu
fabula quae posci volt et spectata[1] reponi.
nec deus intersit, nisi dignus vindice nodus
inciderit, nec quarta loqui persona laboret.

Actoris partis chorus officiumque virile
defendat, neu quid medios intercinat actus
quod non proposito conducat et haereat apte.
ille bonis faveatque et consilietur amice,[2]
et regat iratos et amet peccare timentis[3];
ille dapes laudet mensae brevis, ille salubrem
iustitiam legesque et apertis otia portis;
ille tegat commissa deosque precetur et oret
ut redeat miseris, abeat fortuna superbis.

Tibia non, ut nunc, orichalco vincta[4] tubaeque
aemula, sed tenuis simplexque foramine pauco[5]
adspirare et adesse choris erat utilis atque
nondum spissa nimis complere sedilia flatu;
quo sane populus numerabilis, utpote parvus,
et frugi castusque[6] verecundusque coibat.
postquam coepit agros extendere victor et urbes
latior amplecti murus, vinoque diurno
placari Genius festis impune diebus,
accessit numerisque modisque licentia maior.

[1] spectata $\delta\lambda\pi$: spectanda (exsp-*BK*) *other* MSS. *Both known to scholiasts. The latter perhaps an early error, due to* Sat. i. 10. 39.
[2] amici(s), *II*. [3] pacare tumentes. [4] iuncta *CK*.
[5] parvo, *II* (*except* π). [6] cautusque *C*: catusque $\phi\psi$.

[a] The *deus ex machina*. As *vindex*, he is to deliver men from difficulties seemingly insoluble.

eyes, which an actor's ready tongue will narrate anon in our presence; so that Medea is not to butcher her boys before the people, nor impious Atreus cook human flesh upon the stage, nor Procne be turned into a bird, Cadmus into a snake. Whatever you thus show me, I discredit and abhor.

189 Let no play be either shorter or longer than five acts, if when once seen it hopes to be called for and brought back to the stage. And let no god[a] intervene, unless a knot come worthy of such a deliverer, nor let a fourth actor essay to speak.[b]

193 Let the Chorus sustain the part and strenuous duty of an actor, and sing nothing between acts which does not advance and fitly blend into the plot. It should side with the good and give friendly counsel; sway the angry and cherish the righteous. It should praise the fare of a modest board, praise wholesome justice, law, and peace with her open gates; should keep secrets, and pray and beseech the gods that fortune may return to the unhappy, and depart from the proud.

202 The flute—not, as now, bound with brass and a rival of the trumpet, but slight and simple, with few stops—was once of use to lead and aid the chorus and to fill with its breath benches not yet too crowded, where, to be sure, folk gathered, easy to count, because few—sober folk, too, and chaste and modest. But when a conquering race began to widen its domain, and an ampler wall embraced its cities, and when, on festal days, appeasing the Genius[c] by daylight drinking brought no penalty, then both time and tune won greater licence. For what taste

[b] *i.e.* not more than three speaking characters are to be on the stage at once. [c] *Cf. Epistles*, ii. 1. 144.

indoctus quid enim saperet liberque laborum
rusticus urbano confusus, turpis honesto ?
sic priscae motumque et luxuriem addidit arti
tibicen traxitque vagus per pulpita vestem ;
sic etiam fidibus voces crevere severis,
et tulit eloquium insolitum facundia praeceps,
utiliumque sagax rerum et divina futuri
sortilegis non discrepuit sententia Delphis.
Carmine qui tragico vilem certavit ob hircum,
mox etiam agrestis Satyros nudavit et asper
incolumi gravitate iocum[1] temptavit, eo quod
illecebris erat et grata novitate morandus
spectator, functusque sacris et potus et exlex.
verum ita risores, ita commendare dicaces
conveniet Satyros, ita vertere seria ludo,
ne quicumque deus, quicumque adhibebitur heros,
regali conspectus in auro nuper et ostro,
migret in obscuras humili sermone tabernas,
aut, dum vitat humum, nubes et inania captet.
effutire levis indigna Tragoedia versus,
ut festis matrona moveri iussa diebus,
intererit Satyris paulum pudibunda protervis.
non ego inornata et dominantia nomina solum

[1] locum *BKδπ*.

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[a] Horace seems to speak flippantly of the style of choruses in Greek tragedy. He assumes that as the music became more florid, both speech and thought also lost their simplicity, the former becoming dithyrambic, the latter oracular and obscure. It is probable, however, that he has in view the post-classical drama.

[b] Tragedy or "goat-song" was supposed to take its name from the prize of a goat. It was so called, however, because the singers were satyrs, dressed in goat-skins. Satyric drama, the subject of this passage, is closely connected with tragedy, and must not be handled as comedy.

could you expect of an unlettered throng just freed from toil, rustic mixed up with city folk, vulgar with nobly-born? So to the early art the flute-player added movement and display, and, strutting o'er the stage, trailed a robe in train. So, too, to the sober lyre new tones were given, and an impetuous style brought in an unwonted diction; and the thought, full of wise saws and prophetic of the future, was attuned to the oracles of Delphi.[a]

220 The poet who in tragic song first competed for a paltry goat[b] soon also brought on unclad the woodland Satyrs, and with no loss of dignity roughly essayed jesting, for only the lure and charm of novelty could hold the spectator, who, after observance of the rites,[c] was well drunken and in lawless mood. But it will be fitting so to seek favour for your laughing, bantering Satyrs, so to pass from grave to gay, that no god, no hero, who shall be brought upon the stage, and whom we have just beheld in royal gold and purple, shall shift with vulgar speech into dingy hovels, or, while shunning the ground, catch at clouds and emptiness. Tragedy, scorning to babble trivial verses, will, like a matron bidden to dance on festal days, take her place in the saucy Satyrs' circle with some little shame. Not mine shall it be, ye Pisos, if writing Satyric plays, to

It came as a fourth play after a tragic trilogy. Horace treats this form as if it had developed out of tragedy, whereas in fact tragedy is an offshoot from it (see *e.g.* Barnett, *The Greek Drama*, p. 11). As for a Satyric drama in Latin, little is known about it, but Pomponius, according to Porphyrio on l. 221, wrote three *Satyrica*, viz. *Atalanta*, *Sisyphus*, and *Ariadne*.

[c] *i.e.* of Bacchus at the Dionysia, when plays were performed.

verbaque, Pisones, Satyrorum scriptor amabo,
nec sic enitar tragico differre colori,
ut nihil intersit, Davusne loquatur et audax[1]
Pythias, emuncto lucrata Simone talentum,
an custos famulusque dei Silenus alumni.
ex noto fictum carmen sequar, ut sibi quivis
speret idem, sudet multum frustraque laboret
ausus idem : tantum series iuncturaque pollet,
tantum de medio sumptis accedit honoris.
silvis deducti caveant me iudice Fauni,
ne velut innati triviis ac paene forenses
aut nimium teneris iuvenentur versibus umquam,
aut immunda crepent ignominiosaque dicta :
offenduntur enim, quibus est equus et pater et res,
nec, si quid fricti[2] ciceris probat et nucis emptor,
aequis accipiunt animis donantve[3] corona.

Syllaba longa brevi subiecta vocatur iambus,
pes citus ; unde etiam trimetris accrescere iussit
nomen iambeis, cum senos redderet ictus
primus ad extremum similis sibi. non ita pridem,

[1] et audax *VBCK*: an audax *a*, *II*.
[2] fricti *aMφψ* : stricti *C*: fracti *BKôπ*.
[3] donantque *π*.

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[a] For *nomina verbaque cf. Sat.* i. 3. 103. Plato (*Cratylus*, 431 B) uses *ῥήματα* and *ὀνόματα* to cover the whole of language. The epithet *dominantia* translates *κύρια*. Such words are the common, ordinary ones, which are contrasted with all that are in any way uncommon.

[b] Davus, Pythias and Simo are cited as names of typical characters in comedy (*cf. Sat.* i. 10. 40). On the other hand, Silenus, the jolly old philosopher, who was father of the Satyrs and guardian of the youthful Dionysus, appeared in Satyric dramas, *e.g.* the *Cyclops* of Euripides.

[c] By *carmen* Horace means poetic style, not plot, as some

affect only the plain nouns and verbs of established use [a]; nor shall I strive so to part company with tragic tone, that it matters not whether Davus be speaking with shameless Pythias, who has won a talent by bamboozling Simo, or Silenus, who guards and serves his divine charge.[b] My aim shall be poetry,[c] so moulded from the familiar that anybody may hope for the same success, may sweat much and yet toil in vain when attempting the same: such is the power of order and connexion, such the beauty that may crown the commonplace. When the Fauns [d] are brought from the forest, they should, methinks, beware of behaving as though born at the crossways and almost as dwelling in the Forum, playing at times the young bloods with their mawkish verses, or cracking their bawdy and shameless jokes. For some take offence—knights, free-born, and men of substance—nor do they greet with kindly feelings or reward with a crown everything which the buyers of roasted beans and chestnuts [e] approve.

251 A long syllable following a short is called an *iambus*—a light foot; hence it commanded that the name of trimeters should attach itself to iambic lines, though it yielded six beats, being from first to last the same throughout.[f] But not so long ago, that it

have taken it. Thus ll. 240-243 are in harmony with those that precede and those that follow. The word *fictum* suggests that this style will look like a new creation. This is to seem easy enough to tempt others to try it.

[a] *i.e.* Satyrs. These wild creatures of the woods must not speak as though they were natives of the city, whether vulgar and coarse or refined and sentimental.

[e] These are still cheap and popular articles of food in Italy.

[f] An iambic trimeter contains six feet, but it takes two feet to make one *metrum*.

tardior ut paulo graviorque veniret ad auris,
spondeos stabilis in iura paterna recepit
commodus et patiens, non ut de sede secunda
cederet aut quarta socialiter. hic et in Acci
nobilibus trimetris apparet rarus, et Enni
in scaenam missos cum magno pondere versus
aut operae celeris nimium[1] curaque carentis
aut ignoratae premit artis crimine turpi.
non quivis videt immodulata poemata iudex,
et data Romanis venia est indigna poetis.
idcircone vager scribamque licenter? an omnis
visuros peccata putem mea, tutus et intra
spem veniae cautus? vitavi denique culpam,
non laudem merui. vos exemplaria Graeca
nocturna versate manu, versate diurna.
at vestri proavi Plautinos et numeros et
laudavere sales, nimium patienter utrumque,
ne dicam stulte, mirati, si modo ego et vos
scimus inurbanum lepido seponere dicto
legitimumque sonum digitis callemus et aure.
Ignotum tragicae genus invenisse Camenae
dicitur et plaustris vexisse poemata Thespis,
quae canerent agerentque peruncti faecibus ora.[2]
post hunc personae pallaeque repertor honestae
Aeschylus et modicis instravit pulpita tignis
et docuit magnumque loqui nitique cothurno.

[1] nimium celeris *a*. [2] ora *aKM*, *II*: atris *BC*.

[a] The admission of spondees to the odd places in the trimeter, though mentioned by Horace as recent, is really very old. Pure iambic trimeters are occasionally used by Catullus and by Horace (*Epode* xvi.).

[b] The epithet given by this poet's admirers. *Cf. Epist.* i. 19. 39.

[c] See notes on *Epist.* ii. 1. 170-176.

[d] Jesting from wagons (*τὰ ἐξ ἁμάξης σκώμματα*), in the processions which formed a feature of the vintage celebration,

might reach the ears with somewhat more slowness and weight, it admitted the steady spondees to its paternal rights,[a] being obliging and tolerant, but not so much so as to give up the second and fourth places in its friendly ranks. In the " noble " [b] trimeters of Accius this *iambus* appears but seldom ; and on the verses which Ennius hurled ponderously upon the stage it lays the shameful charge either of hasty and too careless work or of ignorance of the art. Not every critic discerns unmusical verses, and so undeserved indulgence has been granted our Roman poets. Am I therefore to run loose and write without restraint? Or, supposing that all will see my faults, shall I seek safety and take care to keep within hope of pardon? At the best I have escaped censure, I have earned no praise. For yourselves, handle Greek models by night, handle them by day. Yet your forefathers, you say, praised both the measures and the wit of Plautus. Too tolerant, not to say foolish, was their admiration of both, if you and I but know how to distinguish coarseness from wit, and with fingers and ear can catch the lawful rhythm.[c]

275 Thespis is said to have discovered the Tragic Muse, a type unknown before, and to have carried his pieces in wagons to be sung and acted by players with faces smeared with wine-lees.[d] After him Aeschylus, inventor of the mask and comely robe, laid a stage of small planks, and taught a lofty speech and stately gait on the buskin. To these succeeded

is associated, not with Tragedy, but with Comedy. Horace seems to confuse the two. The words *peruncti faecibus ora* are an allusion to τρυγῳδία, a term used of comedy (*cf.* Aristophanes, *Acharnians*, 499, 500), and derived from τρύξ, " wine-lees."

successit vetus his comoedia, non sine multa
laude ; sed in vitium libertas excidit et vim
dignam lege regi : lex est accepta chorusque
turpiter obticuit sublato iure nocendi.
Nil intemptatum nostri liquere poetae,
nec minimum meruere decus vestigia Graeca
ausi deserere et celebrare domestica facta,
vel qui praetextas vel qui docuere togatas.
nec virtute foret clarisve[1] potentius armis
quam lingua Latium, si non offenderet unum
quemque poetarum limae labor et mora. vos, o
Pompilius sanguis, carmen reprehendite quod non
multa dies et multa litura coercuit atque
praesectum[2] deciens non castigavit ad unguem.
Ingenium misera quia fortunatius arte
credit et excludit sanos Helicone poetas
Democritus, bona pars non unguis ponere curat,
non barbam,[3] secreta petit loca, balnea vitat.
nanciscetur enim pretium nomenque poetae,
si tribus Anticyris caput insanabile numquam
tonsori Licino commiserit. o ego laevus,
qui purgor bilem sub verni temporis horam !
non alius faceret meliora poemata : verum
nil tanti est. ergo fungar vice cotis, acutum
reddere quae ferrum valet, exsors ipsa[4] secandi;

[1] clarisque *BCK*.
[2] praesectum *VBC*: perspectum π: perfectum *a*, *II*.
[3] barbas *B*. [4] exsortita *aBCMR*π.

[a] *Fabulae praetextae* (or *praetextatae*) were tragedies with Roman themes, so called because of the *toga praetexta* worn by the actors. Similarly comedies, in which Roman citizens appeared, were called *togatae*. *Cf. Epist.* ii. 1. 57, and note *e*.

Old Comedy, and won no little credit, but its freedom sank into excess and a violence deserving to be checked by law. The law was obeyed, and the chorus to its shame became mute, its right to injure being withdrawn.

285 Our own poets have left no style untried, nor has least honour been earned when they have dared to leave the footsteps of the Greeks and sing of deeds at home, whether they have put native tragedies or native comedies upon the stage.[a] Nor would Latium be more supreme in valour and glory of arms than in letters, were it not that her poets, one and all, cannot brook the toil and tedium of the file. Do you, O sons of Pompilius,[b] condemn a poem which many a day and many a blot has not restrained and refined ten times over to the test of the close-cut nail.[c]

295 Because Democritus believes that native talent is a greater boon than wretched art, and shuts out from Helicon poets in their sober senses, a goodly number take no pains to pare their nails or to shave their beards; they haunt lonely places and shun the baths—for surely one will win the esteem and name of poet if he never entrusts to the barber Licinus a head that three Anticyras cannot cure.[d] Ah, fool that I am, who purge me of my bile as the season of spring comes on! Not another man would compose better poems. Yet it's not worth while.[e] So I'll play a whetstone's part, which makes steel sharp, but of itself cannot cut. Though I write

[b] The Calpurnii are said to have been descended from Calpus, one of the sons of Numa Pompilius.

[c] A metaphor from sculpture; *cf. Sat.* i. 5. 32.

[d] *Cf. Sat.* ii. 3. 82, 166.

[e] Viz. to write poetry and lose your wits.

munus et officium, nil scribens ipse, docebo,
unde parentur opes, quid alat formetque poetam,
quid deceat,[1] quid non, quo virtus, quo ferat error.
Scribendi recte sapere est et principium et fons.
rem tibi Socraticae poterunt ostendere chartae,
verbaque provisam rem non invita sequentur.
qui didicit patriae quid debeat et quid amicis,
quo sit amore parens, quo frater amandus et hospes,
quod sit conscripti, quod iudicis officium, quae
partes in bellum missi ducis, ille profecto
reddere personae scit convenientia cuique.
respicere exemplar vitae morumque iubebo
doctum imitatorem et vivas hinc ducere voces.
interdum speciosa locis[2] morataque recte
fabula nullius veneris, sine pondere et arte,
valdius oblectat populum meliusque moratur
quam versus inopes rerum nugaeque canorae.
Grais ingenium, Grais dedit ore rotundo
Musa loqui, praeter laudem nullius avaris.
Romani pueri longis rationibus assem
discunt in partis centum diducere. " dicat
filius Albani[3] : si de quincunce remota est
uncia, quid superat? poteras[4] dixisse." " triens."
" eu !
rem poteris servare tuam. redit uncia, quid fit ? "
"semis." an,[5] haec animos aerugo et cura peculi

[1] doceat *aRδ*. [2] iocis *K, II*.
[3] Albini, *II*. [4] poterat *a, II*.
[5] an *VB*: ad *aCMK, II*.

[a] I take *doctum* as a repetition of *qui didicit* (l. 312). The drama is an imitation of life, and the would-be dramatist who has first learned about life from his studies should next turn to real life and make his own observations.

[b] Some take *locis* as equivalent to *sententiis*, moral reflections or commonplaces, which may be used anywhere.

naught myself, I will teach the poet's office and duty; whence he draws his stores; what nurtures and fashions him; what befits him and what not; whither the right course leads and whither the wrong.

309 Of good writing the source and fount is wisdom. Your matter the Socratic pages can set forth, and when matter is in hand words will not be loath to follow. He who has learned what he owes his country and his friends, what love is due a parent, a brother, and a guest, what is imposed on senator and judge, what is the function of a general sent to war, he surely knows how to give each character his fitting part. I would advise one who has learned the imitative art to look to life and manners for a model, and draw from thence living words.[a] At times a play marked by attractive passages [b] and characters fitly sketched, though lacking in charm, though without force and art, gives the people more delight and holds them better than verses void of thought, and sonorous trifles.

323 To the Greeks the Muse gave native wit, to the Greeks she gave speech in well-rounded phrase [c]; they craved naught but glory. Our Romans, by many a long sum, learn in childhood to divide the *as* into a hundred parts. "Let the son of Albinus answer.[d] If from five-twelfths one ounce be taken, what remains? You might have told me by now." "A third." "Good! you will be able to look after your means. An ounce is added; what's the result?" "A half." When once this canker, this lust of petty

[c] *Ore rotundo* is here used of style, not utterance.

[d] This is a school-lesson in arithmetic. The Romans used a duodecimal system (their *as* being divided into twelve ounces), and the children learn to reduce figures to decimals (*in partes centum*).

cum semel imbuerit, speramus[1] carmina fingi
posse linenda cedro et levi servanda cupresso ?
Aut prodesse volunt aut delectare poetae
aut simul et iucunda et idonea dicere vitae.
quidquid praecipies, esto brevis, ut cito dicta
percipiant animi dociles teneantque fideles :
omne supervacuum pleno de pectore manat.
ficta voluptatis causa sint proxima veris,
ne[2] quodcumque velit[3] poscat sibi fabula credi,
neu pransae Lamiae vivum puerum extrahat alvo.
centuriae seniorum agitant expertia frugis,
celsi praetereunt austera poemata Ramnes :
omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulci,
lectorem delectando pariterque monendo.
hic meret aera[4] liber Sosiis, hic et mare transit
et longum noto scriptori prorogat aevum.
Sunt delicta tamen quibus ignovisse velimus :
nam neque chorda sonum reddit, quem volt manus et mens,
poscentique gravem persaepe remittit acutum ;
nec semper feriet quodcumque minabitur arcus.
verum ubi plura nitent in carmine, non ego paucis
offendar maculis, quas aut incuria fudit
aut humana parum cavit natura. quid ergo est ?
ut scriptor si peccat idem librarius usque,
quamvis est monitus, venia caret, et[5] citharoedus
ridetur, chorda qui semper oberrat[6] eadem :

[1] speremus, *II.* [2] nec *BC.* [3] volet, *II.*
[4] aere *C*, *II* (*but not* π). [5] ut. [6] oberret *aM.*

[a] Lamia was "a bugbear of the Greek nursery."
[b] An ancient classification of the citizens into *seniores* and *iuniores* is here referred to. The former were between the ages of forty-six and sixty. The terms Ramnes, Tities, and Luceres were applied to the three centuries of *equites*

gain has stained the soul, can we hope for poems to be fashioned, worthy to be smeared with cedar-oil, and kept in polished cypress ?

333 Poets aim either to benefit, or to amuse, or to utter words at once both pleasing and helpful to life. Whenever you instruct, be brief, so that what is quickly said the mind may readily grasp and faithfully hold : every word in excess flows away from the full mind. Fictions meant to please should be close to the real, so that your play must not ask for belief in anything it chooses, nor from the Ogress's [a] belly, after dinner, draw forth a living child. The centuries of the elders chase from the stage what is profitless ; the proud Ramnes disdain poems [b] devoid of charms. He has won every vote who has blended profit and pleasure, at once delighting and instructing the reader. That is the book to make money for the Sosii [c] ; this the one to cross the sea and extend to a distant day its author's fame.

347 Yet faults there are which we can gladly pardon ; for the string does not always yield the sound which hand and heart intend, but when you call for a flat often returns you a sharp ; nor will the bow always hit whatever mark it threatens. But when the beauties in a poem are more in number, I shall not take offence at a few blots which a careless hand has let drop, or human frailty has failed to avert. What, then, is the truth ? As a copying clerk is without excuse if, however much warned, he always makes the same mistake, and a harper is laughed at who always blunders on the same string :

formed by Romulus, so that " Ramnes " is here used for the young aristocrats.

[c] For the Sosii, famous booksellers, *cf. Epist.* i. 20. 2.

sic mihi, qui multum cessat, fit Choerilus ille,
quem bis terve[1] bonum cum risu miror ; et idem
indignor quandoque bonus dormitat Homerus,
verum operi[2] longo fas est obrepere somnum.
Ut pictura poesis : erit quae, si propius stes,
te capiat magis, et quaedam, si longius abstes.
haec amat obscurum, volet haec sub luce videri,
iudicis argutum quae non formidat acumen ;
haec placuit semel, haec deciens repetita placebit.
O maior iuvenum, quamvis et voce paterna
fingeris ad rectum et per te sapis, hoc tibi dictum
tolle memor, certis medium et tolerabile rebus
recte concedi. consultus iuris et actor
causarum mediocris abest virtute diserti
Messallae, nec scit[3] quantum Cascellius Aulus,
sed tamen in pretio est : mediocribus esse poetis
non homines, non di, non concessere columnae.
ut gratas inter mensas symphonia discors
et crassum unguentum et Sardo cum melle papaver
offendunt, poterat duci quia cena sine istis :
sic animis natum inventumque poema iuvandis,
si paulum summo decessit, vergit[4] ad imum.
ludere qui nescit, campestribus abstinet armis,
indoctusque pilae discive trochive quiescit,
ne spissae risum tollant impune coronae :
qui nescit versus tamen audet fingere. quidni ?
liber et ingenuus, praesertim census equestrem
summam nummorum vitioque remotus ab omni.

[1] terque *aCM*. [2] opere δ : opere in *aM*.
[3] nec scit *VB* : nescit *aCM*. [4] pergit *BC*.

[a] *Dormitat* = ἀπονυστάζει. *Cf.* ἐν ἐπιστολῇ γράψας . . . ἀπονυστάζειν τὸν Δημοσθένην (Plutarch, *Cicero*, 24).

[b] Poppy-seeds, when roasted and served with honey, were considered a delicacy, but were spoilt if the honey had a bitter flavour.

so the poet who often defaults, becomes, methinks, another Choerilus, whose one or two good lines cause laughter and surprise; and yet I also feel aggrieved, whenever good Homer "nods,"[a] but when a work is long, a drowsy mood may well creep over it.

361 A poem is like a picture: one strikes your fancy more, the nearer you stand; another, the farther away. This courts the shade, that will wish to be seen in the light, and dreads not the critic insight of the judge. This pleased but once; that, though ten times called for, will always please.

366 O you elder youth, though wise yourself and trained to right judgement by a father's voice, take to heart and remember this saying, that only some things rightly brook the medium and the bearable. A lawyer and pleader of middling rank falls short of the merit of eloquent Messalla, and knows not as much as Aulus Cascellius, yet he has a value. But that poets be of middling rank, neither men nor gods nor booksellers ever brooked. As at pleasant banquets an orchestra out of tune, an unguent that is thick, and poppy-seeds served with Sardinian honey,[b] give offence, because the feast might have gone on without them: so a poem, whose birth and creation are for the soul's delight, if in aught it falls short of the top, sinks to the bottom. He who cannot play a game, shuns the weapons of the Campus,[c] and, if unskilled in ball or quoit or hoop, remains aloof, lest the crowded circle break out in righteous laughter. Yet the man who knows not how dares to frame verses. Why not? He is free, even free-born, nay, is rated at the fortune of a knight, and stands clear from every blemish.

[a] The Campus Martius in Rome.

Tu nihil invita dices faciesve[1] Minerva ;
id tibi iudicium est, ea mens. si quid tamen olim
scripseris, in Maeci descendat iudicis auris
et patris et nostras, nonumque prematur in annum,
membranis intus positis : delere licebit
quod non edideris ; nescit vox missa reverti.
Silvestris homines sacer interpresque deorum
caedibus et victu foedo deterruit Orpheus,
dictus ob hoc lenire tigris rabidosque[2] leones.
dictus et Amphion, Thebanae conditor urbis,[3]
saxa movere sono testudinis et prece blanda
ducere quo vellet. fuit haec sapientia quondam,
publica privatis secernere, sacra profanis,
concubitu prohibere vago, dare iura maritis,
oppida moliri, leges incidere ligno.
sic honor et nomen divinis vatibus atque
carminibus venit. post hos insignis Homerus
Tyrtaeusque mares animos in Martia bella
versibus exacuit ; dictae per carmina sortes,
et vitae monstrata via est, et gratia regum
Pieriis temptata modis, ludusque repertus
et longorum operum finis : ne forte pudori
sit tibi Musa lyrae sollers et cantor Apollo.

[1] faciesque *aM.* [2] rapidos *aCM, II.* [3] arcis *aM.*

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[a] The phrase *invita Minerva* is explained by Cicero, *De off.* i. 31. 10, as meaning *adversante et repugnante natura* : *cf.* "crassa Minerva," *Sat.* ii. 2. 3.

[b] *Cf. Sat.* i. 10. 38. [c] *Cf. Epist.* i. 20. 6.

[d] The laws of Solon were published thus.

[e] The first poets were inspired teachers.

[f] Tyrtaeus, who according to tradition was a lame Attic schoolmaster, composed marching-songs and martial elegies for the Spartans in the seventh century B.C.

385 But *you* will say nothing and do nothing against Minerva's will[a]; such is your judgement, such your good sense. Yet if ever you do write anything, let it enter the ears of some critical Maecius,[b] and your father's, and my own; then put your parchment in the closet and keep it back till the ninth year. What you have not published you can destroy; the word once sent forth can never come back.[c]

391 While men still roamed the woods, Orpheus, the holy prophet of the gods, made them shrink from bloodshed and brutal living; hence the fable that he tamed tigers and ravening lions; hence too the fable that Amphion, builder of Thebes's citadel, moved stones by the sound of his lyre, and led them whither he would by his supplicating spell. In days of yore, this was wisdom, to draw a line between public and private rights, between things sacred and things common, to check vagrant union, to give rules for wedded life, to build towns, and grave laws on tables of wood[d]; and so honour and fame fell to bards and their songs, as divine.[e] After these Homer won his renown, and Tyrtaeus[f] with his verses fired manly hearts for battles of Mars. In song oracles were given, and the way of life was shown[g]; the favour of kings was sought in Pierian strains,[h] and mirth was found to close toil's long spell.[i] So you need not blush for the Muse skilled in the lyre, and for Apollo, god of song.

[g] In didactic poetry such as Hesiod's, and gnomic poetry such as Solon's.

[h] A reference to Pindar, Simonides, and Bacchylides.

[i] The *ludus* is such festal mirth as was exhibited in the dramatic performances of the Dionysia. *Cf. Epist.* ii. 1. 139 ff.

Natura fieret laudabile carmen an arte,
quaesitum est: ego nec studium sine divite vena,
nec rude quid prosit[1] video ingenium: alterius sic
altera poscit opem res et coniurat amice.
qui studet optatam cursu contingere metam,
multa tulit fecitque puer, sudavit et alsit,
abstinuit Venere et vino; qui Pythia cantat
tibicen, didicit prius extimuitque magistrum.
nunc[2] satis est[3] dixisse: "ego mira poemata pango;
occupet extremum scabies; mihi turpe relinqui est
et quod non didici sane nescire fateri."
Ut praeco, ad merces turbam qui cogit emendas,
adsentatores iubet ad lucrum ire poeta
dives agris,[4] dives positis in faenore nummis.
si[5] vero est, unctum qui recte ponere possit
et spondere levi pro paupere et eripere atris[6]
litibus implicitum, mirabor, si sciet inter-
noscere mendacem verumque beatus amicum.
tu seu donaris seu quid donare voles cui,[7]
nolito ad versus tibi factos ducere plenum
lactitiae: clamabit enim "pulchre! bene! recte!"
pallescet super his, etiam stillabit amicis
ex oculis rorem, saliet, tundet pede terram.
ut qui conducti plorant in funere dicunt
et faciunt prope plura dolentibus ex animo, sic
derisor vero plus laudatore movetur.
reges dicuntur multis urgere culullis

[1] possit. [2] nec. [3] et *BC*. [4] agri *BC*.
[5] sin λπ. [6] artis: *so Bentley*. [7] qui *B*: quoi *V*.

[a] An allusion to a game of tag, in which the children cried: hábeat scabiem quísquis ad me vénerit novíssimus. Horace means that people play at poetry like children. *Cf. Ep.* i. 1. 59.

408 Often it is asked whether a praiseworthy poem be due to Nature or to art. For my part, I do not see of what avail is either study, when not enriched by Nature's vein, or native wit, if untrained; so truly does each claim the other's aid, and make with it a friendly league. He who in the race-course craves to reach the longed-for goal, has borne much and done much as a boy, has sweated and shivered, has kept aloof from wine and women. The flautist who plays at the Pythian games, has first learned his lessons and been in awe of a master. To-day 'tis enough to say: "I fashion wondrous poems: the devil take the hindmost![a] 'Tis unseemly for me to be left behind, and to confess that I really do not know what I have never learned."

419 Like the crier, who gathers a crowd to the auction of his wares, so the poet bids flatterers flock to the call of gain, if he is rich in lands, and rich in moneys put out at interest. But if he be one who can fitly serve a dainty dinner, and be surety for a poor man of little credit, or can rescue one entangled in gloomy suits-at-law, I shall wonder if the happy fellow will be able to distinguish between a false and a true friend. And you, if you have given or mean to give a present to anyone, do not bring him, in the fulness of his joy, to hear verses you have written. For he will call out "Fine! good! perfect!" He will change colour over them; he will even distil the dew from his friendly eyes, he will dance and thump the ground with his foot. As hired mourners at a funeral say and do almost more than those who grieve at heart, so the man who mocks is more moved than the true admirer. Kings, we are told, ply with many a bumper and test with

et torquere mero, quem perspexisse laborent,[1] 435
an sit amicitia dignus : si carmina condes,
numquam te fallent[2] animi sub volpe latentes.
Quintilio si quid recitares, " corrige, sodes,
hoc," aiebat, " et hoc." melius te posse negares
bis terque expertum frustra, delere iubebat 440
et male tornatos[3] incudi reddere versus.
si defendere delictum quam vertere malles,
nullum ultra verbum aut operam insumebat inanem,
quin sine rivali teque et tua solus amares.
vir bonus et prudens versus reprehendet inertis, 445
culpabit duros, incomptis allinet atrum
transverso calamo signum, ambitiosa recidet
ornamenta, parum claris lucem dare coget,
arguet ambigue dictum, mutanda notabit,
fiet Aristarchus ; nec[4] dicet: " cur ego amicum 450
offendam in nugis ? " hae nugae seria ducent
in mala derisum semel exceptumque sinistre.
Ut mala quem scabies aut morbus regius urget
aut fanaticus error et iracunda Diana,
vesanum tetigisse timent fugientque[5] poëtam 455
qui sapiunt ; agitant pueri incautique sequuntur.
hic, dum sublimis versus ructatur et errat,

[1] laborant, *II* (*not* ϕ). [2] fallant $\phi\psi\delta$.
[3] torquatos *E*: ter natos *Bentley*. [4] non, *II*.
[5] fugientque *aE*: fugentque *M*: fugiuntque *K*.

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[a] In one of Aesop's fables, the crow, yielding to the fox's flattery, drops the cheese he has found.

[b] *i.e.* Quintilius Varus, whose death is lamented in *Odes*, i. 24.

[c] The name of Aristarchus, famous as an Homeric scholar of Alexandria in the second century B.C., had become proverbial as that of a keen critic.

wine the man they are anxious to see through, whether he be worthy of their friendship. If you mean to fashion verses, never let the intent that lurks beneath the fox ensnare you.[a]

438 If you ever read aught to Quintilius,[b] he would say: "Pray correct this and this." If, after two or three vain trials, you said you could not do better, he would bid you blot it out, and return the ill-shaped verses to the anvil. If you preferred defending your mistake to amending it, he would waste not a word more, would spend no fruitless toil, to prevent your loving yourself and your work alone without a rival. An honest and sensible man will censure lifeless lines, he will find fault with harsh ones; if they are graceless, he will draw his pen across and smear them with a black stroke; he will cut away pretentious ornament; he will force you to flood the obscure with light, will convict the doubtful phrase, will mark what should be changed, will prove an Aristarchus.[c] He will not say, "Why should I give offence to a friend about trifles?" These trifles will bring that friend into serious trouble, if once he has been laughed down and given an unlucky reception.

453 As when the accursed itch plagues a man, or the disease of kings,[d] or a fit of frenzy and Diana's wrath,[e] so men of sense fear to touch a crazy poet and run away; children tease and pursue him rashly. He, with head upraised, splutters verses and off he strays;

[a] The *morbus regius*, said to be so called because the patient was treated with costly remedies, which only the rich (*reges*) could afford, was our jaundice and was supposed to be contagious.

[e] "Lunacy" was supposed to be caused by the moon, and the moon-goddess was Diana.

si[1] veluti merulis intentus decidit auceps
in puteum foveamve, licet " succurrite " longum
clamet " io cives ! " non sit qui tollere curet.
si curet quis opem ferre et demittere[2] funem,
" qui scis, an prudens huc se deiecerit[3] atque
servari nolit ? " dicam, Siculique poetae
narrabo interitum. deus immortalis haberi
dum cupit Empedocles, ardentem frigidus Aetnam
insiluit. sit ius liceatque perire poetis :
invitum qui servat, idem facit occidenti.
nec semel hoc fecit, nec, si retractus erit, iam
fiet homo et ponet famosae mortis amorem.
nec satis apparet, cur versus factitet, utrum
minxerit in patrios cineres, an triste bidental
moverit incestus : certe furit, ac velut ursus,
obiectos[4] caveae valuit si frangere clatros,
indoctum doctumque fugat recitator acerbus ;
quem vero arripuit, tenet occiditque legendo,
non missura cutem, nisi plena cruoris, hirudo.

[1] si $K\delta$: sic *aEM*.
[2] dimittere *most* MSS.
[3] proiecerit, *H*.
[4] obiectas *E*.

[a] So Thales is said to have fallen into a well while studying the stars (Plato, *Theaetetus*, 174 A).

then if, like a fowler with his eyes upon blackbirds, he fall into a well [a] or pit, despite his far-reaching cry, "Help, O fellow-citizens!" not a soul will care to pull him out. And if one should care to lend aid and let down a rope, "How do you know," I'll say, "but that he threw himself in on purpose, and does not wish to be saved?" and I'll tell the tale of the Sicilian poet's end. Empedocles, eager to be thought a god immortal, coolly leapt into burning Aetna. Let poets have the right and power to destroy themselves. Who saves a man against his will does the same as murder him. Not for the first time has he done this, nor if he is pulled out will he at once become a human being and lay aside his craving for a notable death. Nor is it very clear how he comes to be a verse-monger. Has he defiled ancestral ashes or in sacrilege disturbed a hallowed plot [b]? At any rate he is mad, and, like a bear, if he has had strength to break the confining bars of his cage, he puts learned and unlearned alike to flight by the scourge of his recitals. If he catches a man, he holds him fast and reads him to death—a leech that will not let go the skin, till gorged with blood.

[b] The *bidental* was a spot struck by lightning, which was consecrated by a sacrifice of sheep (*bidentes*).